

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) An automated telephone assistant device, comprising:

a base unit in communication with an extension control device, the base unit connecting at least one telephone jack to a network interface device, the network interface device in communication with a telephone network, the base unit communicating with the extension control device via a non-audio signal, the extension control device receiving power from a current on a telephone line, the extension control device building up a charge that generates a ring event on the telephone line, at least one of the base unit and the extension control device executing at least a first algorithm, the algorithm entered and modifiable to the base unit by a user through the extension control device, the first algorithm selectively communicating an incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to a selected telephone jack via the base unit, the base unit accessing one or more user-defined rules to select the telephone jack and to route the incoming communication to the selected telephone jack, the base unit further accessing another user-defined rule to prevent routing of the incoming communication to the selected telephone jack such that an idle, selected telephone jack maintains an on-hook state of a telephone line serving the telephone jack during communication of the incoming telephone call to the base unit.

2. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the extension control device is associated with a predetermined telephone extension of the selected telephone jack and assists the base unit in selectively processing the incoming telephone call
3. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 2, wherein the base unit and the extension control device communicate via a plurality of signals, wherein the plurality of signals direct the extension control device to generate a ring

event for a telephone of the selected telephone jack associated with the predetermined telephone extension.

4. (Cancel)
5. (Cancel)
6. (Original) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 2, wherein the base unit further comprises a second algorithm operable for detecting the presence of and identifying the extension control device.
7. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 6, wherein the base unit further comprises a third algorithm operable for assigning a common name to the extension control device.
8. (Original) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 7, wherein the base unit further comprises a permanent storage device operable for storing the identity and the common name of the extension control device.
9. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the base unit further comprises a dual-tone multi-frequency interface operable for allowing a user to control the base unit and modify the first algorithm.
10. (Original) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the base unit further comprises a voice interface operable for allowing the user to control the base unit and modify the first algorithm.
11. (Original) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the base unit further comprises a voicemail message that is selectively transmitted to callers.

12. (Original) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the first algorithm is operable for identifying a caller.
13. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 12, wherein the base unit selectively routes the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack having a user-defined rule that matches an instruction to route the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon the identity of the caller, and wherein the base unit further selectively prevents routing of the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to the selected telephone jack having another user-defined rule that matches an instruction to prevent routing of the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon the identity of the caller.
14. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the base unit selectively routes the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack having a user-defined rule to route the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon the time of day, and selectively prevents routing of the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to the selected telephone jack having another user-defined rule to prevent routing of the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon the time of day.
15. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the base unit selectively routes the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to one or more telephone jacks in one or more predetermined locations in a structure matching the user-defined rule based upon the time of day and selectively prevents routing of the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to the one or more telephone jacks in the one or more predetermined locations in the structure matching the user-defined rule based upon the time of day.
16. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the base unit selectively routes the incoming telephone call received from the telephone

network to the selected telephone jack having a user-defined rule to route the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon entry of an authorization code by a caller, and selectively prevents routing of the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to the selected telephone jack having another user-defined rule to prevent routing of the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon entry of the authorization code by a caller.

17. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the base unit selectively routes the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack having a user-defined rule to route the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon recognition of a caller's voice, and selectively prevents routing of the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to the selected telephone jack having another user-defined rule to prevent routing of the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon recognition of the caller's voice.
18. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the base unit is operable for directing the selected telephone jack to produce a plurality of ringing tones, each of the plurality of ringing tones associated with the ascertained identity of a caller.
19. (Original) The automated telephone assistant device of claim 2, wherein the extension control device is operable for providing a common connection to a plurality of telephone lines.
20. (Previously Presented) An automated telephone assistant method, comprising:

providing a base unit in communication with an extension control device, the base unit connecting at least one telephone jack to a network interface device, the network interface device in communication with a telephone network, the base unit communicating with the extension control device via a non-audio signal, the extension

control device receiving power from a current on a telephone line, the extension control device building up a charge that generates a ring event on the telephone line;

accessing at least a first algorithm within the base unit, the first algorithm entered and modifiable to the base unit by a user through the extension control device and comprising one or more user-defined rules for selectively processing the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network, the one or more user-defined rules comprising a user-defined selection rule to select the telephone jack, a user-defined routing rule to route the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack, a user-defined blocking rule to prevent routing of the incoming communication to the selected telephone jack such that an idle, selected telephone jack maintains an on-hook state of a telephone line serving the selected telephone jack during communication of the incoming telephone call to the base unit;

executing the first algorithm by at least one of the base unit and the extension control device;

when the user-defined rule comprises a routing instruction, then selectively routing an incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to be routed to the selected telephone jack; and

when the user-defined rule comprises a blocking instruction, then selectively preventing the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network from being routed to the selected telephone jack.

21. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, wherein the extension control device is associated with a predetermined telephone extension of the selected telephone jack and assists the base unit in selectively processing the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network.
22. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 21, further comprising directing the extension control device to generate a ring event for the selected telephone jack associated with the predetermined telephone extension.

23. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 21, further comprising disposing a second algorithm within the base unit, the second algorithm detecting the presence of and identifying the extension control device.
24. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 23, further comprising disposing a third algorithm within the base unit, the third algorithm assigning a common name to the extension control device.
25. (Original) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 24, further comprising storing the identity and the common name of the extension control device within a permanent storage device disposed within the base unit.
26. (Original) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, further comprising allowing a user to control the base unit and modify the first algorithm via a dual-tone multi-frequency interface.
27. (Original) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, further comprising allowing a user to control the base unit and modify the first algorithm via a voice interface.
28. (Original) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, further comprising selectively transmitting a voicemail message to callers.
29. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, wherein the first algorithm identifies a caller.
30. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 29, wherein the base unit selectively routes the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon the identity of the caller, and selectively prevents routing of the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon the identity of the caller.

31. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, wherein the base unit selectively routes the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon the time of day, and selectively prevents routing of the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon the time of day.
32. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, wherein the base unit selectively routes the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to one or more telephone jacks in one or more predetermined locations in a structure matching the user-defined rule based upon the time of day and selectively prevents routing of the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to the one or more telephone jacks in the one or more predetermined locations in the structure matching the user-defined rule based upon the time of day.
33. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, wherein the base unit selectively routes the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to the selected telephone jack having a user-defined rule to route the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon entry of an authorization code by a caller, and selectively prevents routing of the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to the selected telephone jack having another user-defined rule to prevent routing of the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon entry of the authorization code by a caller.
34. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, wherein the base unit selectively routes the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack having a user-defined rule to route the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon recognition of a caller's voice, and selectively prevents routing of the incoming telephone call received from the telephone network to the selected telephone jack having another user-defined rule to prevent routing of the incoming telephone call to the selected telephone jack based upon recognition of the caller's voice.

35. (Previously Presented) The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, further comprising directing the selected telephone jack to produce a plurality of ring tones, each of the plurality of ring tones associated with the ascertained identity of a caller.